C H U R C H N E W S

F R O M T H E N O R T H E R N C O U N T R I E S

Edited by the Northern Ecumenical Institute
Sigtuna, Sweden
Director: Dr. Harry Johansson, Sigtuna, Sweden
Editor: Rev. Johs. Langhoff, Øster Egesborg per Mern, Denmark

No. 10 October 6th, 1955.

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In all there are 52.000 Catholics in the Northern countries, though 1/4 of this number were not born here, but have come as immigrants or refugees. Denmark has 27.000, Sweden 18.000, Norway 5.000, and Finland 2.000. Two thirds of Sweden's Catholics are aliens who came to Sweden during or after the last War. There have been relatively few conversions to Catholicm in the Northern countries.

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At its general conference in Copenhagen the international Blue Cross (the evangelical temperance societies) decided to extend its contact with British and American Christian temperance societies and to work for the establishment of a world council of Christian temperance societies at the big anti-alcohol congress to be held in Istanbul next summer. This congress will be the greatest united effort so far to solve temperance problems, and sociologists, policemen, doctors, and temperance societies of all kinds will take part.

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A contributory factor to the desire for world-wide co-operation is the fact that Africa to-day presents so great a problem to the temperance movement that it is necessary to join forces if it is to be solved. The consumption of alcohol in Africa has risen tremendously in the last 15-20 years, and the situation may develop into a catastrophe for the African people if things do not change. To exemplify this it was stated before the general conference that the import of wine to Cameroon has increased 14-fold from 1939 to 1952, and that the consumption of alcohol has increased 10-fold in the same period.

The African pastor M. Bahoken described the situation in Africa saying that the African people were in danger of suffering the same fate as the American Indians after the Spanish conquest. The alcoholization of the Africans is comparable to destroying them by war. The population is being morally, intellectually, and spiritually corrupted. In many places alcohol is even used as a means of payment and as wages, and in French territories it is often the poorer wines that are given to the Africans, though at a considerably higher price than is paid for the better wines in France.

In this situation the churches must realize their responsibility so that the fate foretold by the former French Minister of the Colonial Office M. Robert Buron in an article in the paper published by the French Blue Cross: that "Europe is proceeding to destroy the African race" may not come true.

Strong Christian Influence in Danish Radio.

The Danish State Radio has published its programme plans for the coming season. The plans show that in addition to the usual morning prayer services and the two Sunday church services there will be a strong Christian influence in other programmes.

The former Minister of Education Professor Flemming Hvidberg is to give a series of four lectures called "From the Old Testament World". A big feature about Søren Kierkegaard has also been planned. There will be four transmissions in the series "Music in the Church" this season. Two other series of a very popular kind will also deal with Christian subjects; thus, one of the men to be interviewed in the programme "Men of experience are worth visiting" will be a pastor. It is also possible that the successful "Church Letter-box" will be taken up again. The monthly "Church Magazine" is to continue, and the school programmes will again include a number of broadcasts on religion.

Former Foreign Minister Actively Engaged in MRA.

The former Danish Foreign Minister, Mr. Ole Bjørn Kraft, who has for some time been the leader of the Conservative group in Parliament, has declared that he is going to give his services to MRA. Mr. Kraft was one of those who took the initiative for the MRA-sponsored tour of international politicians to the East in July and August, and he himself took part in almost the whole tour. It was on his return from this tour that he confessed his allegiance to the principles of MRA and said that he felt that he belonged to MRA.

- The tour has made me realize how vain a thing ambition is and how dangerous the limelight is to an "old political war-horse" like me, says Mrs. Kraft. Ambition makes a man act wrongly 24 hours a day, but once one can get rid of ambition it is possible to attain peace of mind and heart. In future I whish to learn to become a servant of this moral ideology.

Of the tour he said: MRA's world mission will prove to be a turning point in history. This mission has stirred the nations. It spoke to their deepest need and aspirations. In the new historical era, which is beginning now, the ancient countries and civilizations of the East together with the young and inspired peoples of Africa will give the West new light.

FINLAND

100.000 Heard Tommy Hicks in Helsinki, (Helsingfors).

The American revivalist Tommy Hicks has had great success in Helsinki (Helsingfors) comparable to that which he has experienced in the Argentine and in the Soviet Union. The 10 evening meetings at which he spoke drew an average of 10.000 listeners.

The revival meetings were backed by the Lutheran National Church with Bishop Elis Gulin at its head and by the Free Churches.

Hicks came right from the Soviet Union where he had held revivalist meetings in Stalingrad, Harkow, and Voronesh, at the invitation of the Association of the Evangelical Churches. He informed the Finnish press that he had had to speak four times without an interpreter and only once had he had a Christian as interpreter. The meetings had been well attended.

Finland's Greek Orthodox Church Clings to Constantinople.

At a church conference at Kuopio the Finnish Orthodox Church unanimously has resolved to maintain its canonical position unaltered, i.e. to remain under the Patriarch in Constantinople. The special situation of the Valamo and Konevitsa monasteries was discussed, the monks here having joined the patriarchate of Moscow, and this step was unanimously declared to be against the laws. The Church Board was directed to see that the lawful relationship was reintroduced in the two monasteries while preserving amicable relations with the Patriarch in Moscow and striving to maintain the internal peace of the monasteries in co-operation with a committee appointed by the Church conference.

The conference also elected the 41 year old priest and monk Paavali, whose layman's name is Yrjö Olmari, assistant bishop in the arch-diocese. The new bishop is a monk from the Valamo monastery.

The Karelians' Living Christianity Spread over Finland.

Governor Arvo Manner, who has held office for 30 years in the Southeastern part of Finland, recently stated in an inter-

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view to the Christian paper "Kotimaa":

- The Karelians (whose native land was ceded to Russia after the War so that they had to be moved to various parts of Finland) brought much living Christianity to the rest of Finland when they were evacuated, and thus gave the congregations of which they became members much life and colour. They also brought a social warmth with them which is characteristic of the Karelians. In an unexpectedly short time the Karelians have adapted themselves to their new homes. This is partly due to support from the State and the community, but it is also largely due to their own activity and to their will to reconstruct. But their greatest source of strength has been the Karelian people's serious approach to life and its inmost values. I hope that the Karelians will continue to trust in God's guidance.

News Flashes.

On the 50th anniversary of the Social Democratic Association in Rovaniemi a special church service was held. This is the first time a church service has been held in connection with such an anniversary.

At the meeting of the Northern Council of Male Nurses in Pieksämäki it was decided that all male nurses in the Northern countries are to wear the same emblem.

ICELAND

Expanding Christian Work Among Young People.

The YMCA and YWCA in Iceland have been gratified to find a larger participation than ever before in their summer camps.

The YMCA's modern building in Reykjavik has received several artistic additions this summer; a bronze statue has been erected of Dr. Fridrik Fridriksson, one of the pioneers of the youth movement, who is now 87 years old. It is the first time in the history of Iceland that a statue of a living person has been erected.

Committee to Plan for 900th Anniversary.

Iceland's Minister of Church Affairs has appointed a committee to plan for the large celebrations in Iceland next summer to commemorate the establishment of the first Icelandic diocese at Skálholt 900 years ago. The chairman of the committee is head of the diocesan office, Sira Sveinn Vikingur.

NORWAY

Protest Against Home Guard Exercises on Sundays.

A suggestion which the Norwegian Home Guard has made to the Ministry of Defence asking that a royal order be issued

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A suggestion which the Norwegian Home Guard has made to the Ministry of Defence asking that a royal order be issued

sanctioning the holding of Home Guard exercises on Sundays and holy days has evoked vigorous protests from the Lutheran National Church as well as the Free Churches. It is pointed out that the present laws only permit work on Sundays in cases of necessity and this must also apply to the Home Guard exercises. It is also maintained that holding these exercises on Sundays will cause religious scruples in many of the men belonging to the Home Guard and undermine the position and prestige of the Home Guard.

The Christian daily in Oslo "Vårt Land" drew attention to the matter demanding that the question be laid before representatives of the Church before the royal order is issued.

Exhibition "From the Land of the Bible" in Oslo.

On September 15th a large archaeological exhibition from Israel was opened under the title "From the Land of the Bible". The exhibition which contains objects borrowed from public and private collections in Israel and in foreign countries has already been shown in USA, London, and Stockholm, and in many ways it is a valuable illustration to the narratives in the Old and New Testaments. The exhibition is being arranged by Dr. Penuel P. Kahane from the National Museum in Jerusalem, and the Norwegian Crown Prince and the President of Israel are protectors.

The Mormons are Buying Buildings all over Norway.

The leader of the Mormon Church in Norway Axel J. Andresen has stated to the Social Democratic daily in Oslo "Arbeiderbladet" that the Mormon Church is buying a large villa in Oslo which will cost 375.000:- Norw. crowns and is furthermore to be remodelled for 210.000 crowns so that it can be used as an assembly hall with offices and an apartment for the leader. In Trondheim a building site has been bought for 50.000:- crowns, where a Mormon church costing 600.000:- crowns is to be built. The Mormons in Drammen have bought some real estate to the value of 100.000 crowns. The greater part of the expenses is covered by American Mormon congregations. In Norway there are only about 1.500 Mormons with 90 active missionaries whose salaries are all paid from America.

The Christian daily in Oslo "Vårt Land" believes that this large-scale purchasing of buildings in Norway heralds a major "attack" from the Mormons.

Laymen's Institute Soon to be Established?

The entirely informal work being carried on by the Institute for Christian Education (Instituttet for Kristen Opseding) in Oslo seems likely to develop into a laymen's institute for the Norwegian Lutheran National Church.

Mr. Eilert Dæhlin has lately made it a regular feature of the institute's work to contribute to a better understanding between the Church and the workers by arranging meetings between pastors and workers, and by arranging a series of lectures, discussions, and study groups dealing with the problems of young homes viewed in the light of Christianity. Both these forms of work have succeeded so well that it seems likely that they may lead to the establishment of a laymen's institute with the

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double purpose of inspiring and training people to work in congregations and societies and to arrange contact meetings with groups of people who are estranged from the Church.

From 8 to 21 Army Chaplains in 2 Years.

From September 1st 5 more army chaplains have been appointed in Norway, so that a total of 21 army chaplains has now been reached. Two years ago there were only 8, but the chaplains have been much in demand, especially since the length of military service has been extended to 16 and 18 months. It is in recognition of this fact that the military leaders and the Ministry of Defence have further increased the number of chaplains.

250 Refugee Boys YMCA's Guests This Summer.

This summer the Norwegian YMCA's refugee service has had 250 refugee boys from Norway and Austria come to Norway, 110 went to their camp "Strandheim", while the rest were placed in private homes. In the seven years that have passed since the YMCA began this work 1,100 refugee boys have been invited to Norway, and the YMCA plans to continue this work as there is evidently still great need for it.

SWEDEN

55 o/o of Sweden's Mothers Want Devout Children.

The Swedish Gallup Ins itute (Svenska Institutet för Opinionsundersökningar) has ascertained that 55 o/o of Sweden's mothers wish their children to be devout. The wish is strongest in older mothers (62 o/o of the mothers between 40 and 55) and weakest in young mothers (41 o/o of the mothers between 18 and 29). Only 4 o/o declared that they did not want devout children. In Stockholm 45 o/o of the mothers answered in the affirmative, whereas in Västergötland (West Sweden) the corresponding figure was 71 o/o.

To the question whether they themselves sought to live as Christians only 36 o/o of the mothers answered yes (44 o/o of the mothers between 40 and 55, only 23 o/o of those between 18 and 29), and when asked whether they made any effort to help the children to a lasting faith 27 o/o answered yes, that is only half of those who wished for devout children. An effort was made by 34 o/o of the mothers between 40 and 55, as against 8 o/o of the mothers between 18 and 29 (though it must be added that the majority of the children in the last group are infants, so that the question is not so pressing). Only 4 o/o of the mothers who were interviewed saw to it that their children went to church. 17 o/o attempted to help them to attain real faith by means of personal talks.

The figures also show that 52 o/o of Sweden's children say evening prayers, whereas 44 o/o do not (no information is given concerning the remaining 4 o/o). Only 3 o/o of the mothers could say that regular family prayers were held in their homes, and among these there were no representatives from the youngest group.

In connection with the poll the paper "Vår Kyrka" issued by the National Church emphasizes the cause for alarm in the fact that many mothers who really wish to have devout children do not dare or are not able to educate the children in the right way. It is this lack of education that is wrongly called "free education", says the paper.

It continues: The problem does not only affect the church or the Christians, but everybody. It is plainly a question of the future of our country. Our culture, developed through generations in this country, has not come into being without an effort by the mothers. To build up and to preserve culture demands sacrifices from parents, and their efforts can never be replaced by even the largest subsidies from State and municipality for the schools. Ought not the cultural circles in our country feel a call to strengthen and encourage the mothers in this all-important task of educating the children, so that they will be able to transmit our cultural heritage? Instead of sapping their courage and giving them a feeling of uncertainty by warning them against "influencing" the children.

The paper concludes by naming several practical aids the Church has to offer those homes that wish to give their children a Christian upbringing.

Only 10.000 People Left the Swedish National Church.

An estimate from 6 of the 13 Swedish dioceses shows that the number of people who have made use of their right to withdraw from the Swedish National Church is only about 10.000 for the entire country after the new Act on religious liberty came into force early in 1952.

Until then even members of the Free Churches had to belong to the National Church and pay church taxes, and it is worth noting that the great majority of the members of the Free Churches have preferred to remain formal members of the National Church even if they do not recognize it as their spiritual home, and even though the "double membership" entails double church dues.

260 More Refugee Families Find Homes in Sweden.

The Swedish Government has stated that Sweden is prepared to receive 260 more refugee families, 60 of them Austrian refugees suffering from tuberculosis. This statement must be regarded as an answer to the appeal issued by UN's refugee Commissioner some time ago asking various countries to contribute towards a speedy evacuation of the refugee camps.

The 200 families will be given work and homes in Sweden, and those suffering from tuberculosis will be placed in sanatoria, while their families will be given homes and, so far as possible, employment near the sanatoria. The refugees will receive the same social rights as Swedish citizens - the same pay, medical care, unemployment relief, etc. - and the possibility of becoming naturalized citizens if they so desire.

In connection with the poll the paper "Vår Kyrka" remarked by the National Church emphasizes the cause for alarm in the fact that many mothers who really wish to have devout children do not dare or are not able to educate the children in the right way. It is this lack of education that is wrong, it declares. "Bad education", says the paper.

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Evaluation of the Results of a Revivalist Campaign.

"All-Christian Offensive" is the name of an evangelization team that has been carrying on revivalist campaigns similar to Billy Graham's in co-operation with both the Swedish National Church and the Free Churches in a number of Swedish towns. In many places the attendance has been very large, but if the work is to be judged by the number of manifest conversions, the results are not always great.

This is not a phenomenon peculiar to All-Christian Offensive or to Sweden, so it is well worth listening to some reflections as to the value of such campaigns put forth by one of those who have actively taken part in this work.

In Västerås where the team campaigned for 6 weeks with daily meetings, the number of "decisions" was 100, reports Dean Oscar Rundblom to the Free Church daily "Svenska Morgonbladet", and all of these were people who had been in contact with the church but had slipped away. The campaign did not reach truly secularized people.

Nevertheless the Dean feels that the revivalist campaign was of real value. It was an attempt to find the right way in which the church could confront modern man with the Gospel and it taught the different denominations to work together for the solution of common problems. But at the same time it showed that the right form of evangelization has not yet been found. Many modern people are secularized, and they have reservations against speedy decisions of the kind called for in old Methodist teaching. But the campaign increased the respect for the churches, especially for the Christian youth movement, and it brought about a strengthening and an expansion of the local ecumenical work, said the Dean.

Number of Suicide Attempts Doubled in Two Years.

There are about 1.200 attempts at suicide a year in Sweden, or more than the total number of victims of traffic accidents, and the number of suicides is increasing. Furthermore, the number of suicide attempts in Stockholm has increased twofold in the course of the last two years, and in the rest of Sweden the rate of increase seems to be comparable.

An investigation shows that the motivation for suicide is unhappy love-affairs or unhappy marriages, next, alcohol problems and psychic disorders, and only in the third place economic difficulties and physical disease. It is characteristic that the attempts at suicide are nearly equally divided between men and women, and that the great majority of attempts are made by divorcees.

Several of the Swedish dailies comment on the dreadful increase of suicides and suicide attempts, saying that people to-day are not anchored in the Christian faith as much as before.

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